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ABSTRACT

Although there is a need for more trained school counselors, a decrease in the size of school counselor preparation programs has been reported and many counselor preparation programs no longer train school counselors. Increasing the number of graduates in school counseling programs requires an increase in resources and commitment in counselor education departments. Renewed attention to recruitment, retention, and cooperative efforts of counselor educators and current school counselors is needed. Several publications are available to help counselor educators develop effective methods of recruiting and marketing. Other publications provide assistance in developing a planned retention program which will help students through graduation. Networking of counselor educators and school counselors may be achieved through professional associations. Coordinated efforts by the profession will increase the likelihood of increasing the number of professionally trained school counselors. To increase the effectiveness of enrollment plans, nationally applicable information must be compiled, assembled, and made available; professional development must focus on increasing professional awareness of the problem and emphasizing skill development; and cooperative plans must be developed among counselor education programs. Counselor education programs must place more emphasis on school programs if the programs are to survive and if adequate numbers of school counselors are to be prepared. (NB)

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Abstract

Recruiting, retention, and networking are examined as contributions to efforts for preserving school counselor education programs. Practical sources of information for these contributions are provided. To increase the effectiveness of the efforts, recommendations are made for coordinated activities by the profession

Recruiting for School Counselor Preparation Programs

The need for an increase in the number of trained school counselors seems clear. The need for elementary counselors has increased because of the increase in the population of children of elementary school age and because the number of states funding elementary school counselors has increased. The need for more secondary school counselors will increase as the school population bulge reaches high school and as the many secondary school counselors appointed in the growth period of school counseling reach retirement age.

Herr observed in 1982 that little more than half the number of secondary school counselors were available to meet the recommended 1 to 250 counselor-to-student ratio, that there was only 1 counselor for every 6 schools, and that many students and families had no access to guidance services. Yet participants in the 1985 SACES Round Table of Department Heads reported a decrease in the size of school counselor preparation programs, and the College Board (1986) reported that many counselor preparation programs no longer train school counselors.

The problem is increased by the need for increased counselor competencies. Many authors (e.g., Aubrey, 1985) have examined the factors at work which make improved counseling skills imperative. Aubrey includes changes in family structure, drug abuse, technology, crime, population shifts, and television. The College Board (1986) has reviewed the emerging need of students for increased aid from counselors, and it has examined the ramifications of perpetuating current disadvantages of

large numbers of students. In a meeting of the College Board Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, no member disagreed with an observation that the nation is in danger of having two school systems, one of which is for second-level citizens. The need for more, better-prepared school counselors appears clear. If existing preparation prorams are to fill that need, they will be required to increase the number of degrees awarded.

The Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES), recognizing the profession's responsibility to preserve counselor education programs, commissioned Dr. Jean Cecil of the University of Alabama to plan an invitational workshop in November, 1986, to examine that obligation. The following information and recommendations have been compiled as a contribution to that effort. They focus on strategies for increasing graduates to meet emerging needs and on professional activities necessary to support those strategies.

Increasing School Counseling Program Graduates

Increasing the number of graduates in school counseling programs requires an increase in resources and commitment to and within counselor education departments. Renewed attention to recruitment, retention, and cooperative efforts of counselor educators and current school counselors will be required.

Recruiting. Educators do not need to rely solely on their own wits for recruiting ideas, since recruiting is a well-developed, specialized field. Samples of available literature are included in the bibliography. A popular publication edited by Smith and Hunt (1986) has readings on the content of

marketing, use of a personal touch, using students and alumni, publications, recruitment tools, and advertising. The reading by Moore (1986) contains ideas for increasing inquiries, increasing applicants, and increasing enrollments. Waltz (1985) has suggested a marketing approach for counselors. Help is available on every campus in the person of university recruiters, who are most likely identified by other titles. They may spend most of their time in search of freshmen, at whom most of the literature is directed. Recruiters may be willing to exchange assistance with counselor educators since the latter are acquainted with current school counselors, the primary contacts of recruiters.

Retention. A planned retention program is equal in importance to a recruiting program. If quality candidates are admitted to a school counselor education program, it follows that every effort should be made to assist them through graduation. Noel, Levitz, Saluri, and Associates (1985) provide readings in depth on increasing retention. A classic review by Astin (1976) of retention findings on 41,000 undergraduate students has some application to graduate students. Williams (1980) combines recruiting and retention into one concept called enrollment strategies. Williams suggests requiring all personnel to be involved, providing customer relations training for all personnel, not screening telephone calls, attending to enrollment goals in all public announcements and correspondence, attending to special interests of students, providing responsive channels for student complaints and suggestions, attending to forecasting, videotaping counselors, making class assignments useful, offering some concentrated courses, offering courses at convenient times,

eliminating nuisances, and other specific actions designed to increase or retain enrollment.

Networking. Plans for identifying, recruiting, retaining, and graduating competent personnel in sufficient numbers may best be carried out as a joint undertaking of school counselors, counselor educators, and professional counselor organizations. Counselors already serving in the system can be helpful in locating teachers with potential for counseling. Counselor feedback on training programs and needs for training are essential. Professional associations can be focal points for unified efforts of practicing school counselors and counselor educators.

Increasing the Effectiveness of Enrollment Plans

Coordinated efforts by the profession will increase the likelihood of increasing the number of professionally trained school counselors. The bases for successful efforts are understanding of the problem, skills to work on the problem, and commitment. Three recommendations are offered to achieve the broad support necessary.

Assembling of information. Information on need, demographics, recruiting and retention will be needed by those seeking to preserve school counselor preparation programs. The first recommendation is that nationally applicable information be compiled, assembled and made available through the resources of Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse, or SACES. Monographs and annotated bibliographies can be made available to local school systems and counselor education programs. Additional information on expected local retirements and local exigencies can be

collected by pupil services units of school systems, universities, or by state associations. The collected information would be utilized in the following two recommendations.

A professional development program. Two thrusts of professional development are needed. The first would focus on increasing professional awareness of the problem. Journal articles, programs at conferences and local meetings, and business meetings of professional associations can increase the understanding of counselors and counselor educators. The second thrust would emphasize skill development. Workshops on recruitment and retention might be held at statewide counselor education meetings. Statewide data can be shared.

Cooperative tasks. With data in hand and knowledge of successful enrollment practices, counselor education units can provided leadership to develop and carry out plans for preserving school counselor preparation programs. It is recommended that cooperative plans be developed. Institutions can exchange strategies. Model programs can be developed and shared. Research projects can examine varied practices as the plans are carried out.

The task seems clear. Counselor education programs will be required to place more emphasis on school programs if the programs are to survive and if adequate numbers of schol counselors are to be prepared. It is the responsibility of counselor educators to provide initiative and leadership in the task. Planned programs of recruitment and retention will be a component of successful efforts.

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